

Preserving Informal Astronomy: Arceli, the PressForward Plugin, and the Archiving of Scientific Communications

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ABSTRACT

This poster will profile and demonstrate a new collaboration focused on community curation, preservation of digital communications, and the archiving of science information on the open web. The PressForward Project, a research initiative concerned with the discoverability of digital gray literature, including blog posts, white papers, data visualizations, and podcasts, and Arceli, a collaborative effort within communities of astronomers whose mission is to preserve informal astronomy communications, are in the process of developing a method to make it possible to curate, archive, index, and cite digital alt-publications.

The PressForward Project, funded by the Alfred P. Sloan Foundation and based at the Roy Rosenzweig Center for History and New Media, was founded in 2011 in response to driving questions about the ability for researchers in any field to keep up with the growing body of literature—some peer-reviewed, most not—found on the open web. As the quantity of gray literature regularly published online continues to grow, so does the task of locating and evaluating the work most relevant to a particular area of scholarly investigation. How does any one scholar or community do it? PressForward seeks both technological and methodological solutions to this problem.

PressForward's technological innovation is the PressForward plugin, a free, open-source WordPress plugin that provides a smoothly integrated editorial process for the aggregation, review, discussion, and republication of external web content within the WordPress dashboard. PressForward aggregates content via RSS feeds, functions as a seamless feed reader, and allows users and groups to mark and discuss individual items before modifying or reproducing them for republication. Communities use this technology to discover and share the most relevant, highest quality work found online, an approach taken by PressForward's prototype publication Digital Humanities Now. This poster will document the use and workflow of the plugin, and presenters will have laptops on hand to demonstrate the plugin and allow audience members to test the plugin in action.

Arceli was created in recognition that the Internet allows astronomers to publish useful material outside of traditional journals, yet there is no effective mechanism for these communications to be archived, indexed and cited. Arceli acts as a facilitator for archiving communications on behalf of authors and providing a structure that NASA/SAO Astrophysics Data Service (ADS) can index. Arceli is envisioned as an archive of alt-publications relevant to the professional astronomy community, including tutorials and how-tos, editorials and commentary, and research blogging.

As a PressForward partner, Arceli envisions using the PressForward plugin to facilitate the curation of materials that will then be submitted to Zenodo, an online repository, where it can be assigned a DOI and be indexed by the ADS. By using these tools, Arceli will preserve the informal communications many astronomers rely upon and make them discoverable and citable. This poster will preview the method that Arceli is currently developing, visualizing the process that a blog post or tutorial will go through from publication to aggregation and curation using PressForward to storage and DOI assignment in Zenodo and indexing in ADS.

The collaboration between PressForward and Arceli represents an innovative approach to the long-term preservation of informal scientific communications, one that we hope can be adapted by other communities with similar archiving needs. The poster will bring together an illustration of the plugin's features and Arceli's methods, offering an example of a creative workflow from publication to preservation, helping audience members better understand the possibilities of this approach for their own projects.

General Terms

Frameworks for digital preservation; Preservation strategies and workflows; Innovative practice.

Keywords

digital preservation, gray literature, curation, indexing, citation

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